

Floras Bridge Replacement & Easement Environmental Assessment

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Myrtlewood Resource Area
Coos Bay District
Bureau of Land Management

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Section I - Purpose and Need for Action

Summary

Purpose and Need

This environmental assessment is intended to analyze the effects of providing access to BLM lands west of Boice Cope park by acquiring an easement and replacing an existing bridge which has been deemed unsafe for public use.

Easement Acquisition

The purpose of the easement acquisition is to acquire legal access where the BLM and the public have previously enjoyed access from Boice-Cope County Park onto public lands on the north and west sides of Floras Lake. Legal access will allow expenditure of public funds to rebuild a deteriorated bridge which was deemed unsafe and removed. The purpose of the replacement bridge is to provide for safe administrative and public access to this parcel, which crosses a fairly deep perennial stream. The need for access is to continue convenient public access into a parcel of lands that was acquired through the use of Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) in 1994 (Scofield property).

The land acquired was, in error, presumed to include as a legal part of the parcel the access point and bridge, either through fee ownership of the bridge site, or a legal right-of-way or easement. Public access and use of this parcel was a significant determination of the point value for the LWCF submission and receipt of funds. Following a cadastral survey in 1998, it was determined that the bridge itself was legally part of the Curry County parcel. The bridge had been constructed under a 1987 permit from the county to the Scofield Corporation which never included a legal right-of-way or easement.

In order to rebuild the bridge, the BLM must first acquire a legal easement to the location, so that the investment for the replacement bridge is secure.

Bridge Replacement

Upon acquisition of an exclusive easement from Curry County, BLM plans to allow for safe public access to the Floras Lake beach parcel by building a new bridge. The old bridge was a rail car bridge over untreated wooden pilings. The pilings are rotten and are falling apart. A replacement bridge will be constructed following removal of the existing structure. Without the bridge, there would be no way to safely cross Floras Creek to access the BLM parcel without a boat, or by traveling several miles south to access the parcel via the Floras Lake State park. Most months of the year, Floras Creek is too deep and cold for people to safely wade.

Past uses of the bridge include administrative and public. Administrative uses have included foot and ATV traffic-for material transport purposes. Public uses have included recreational foot and equestrian traffic. Prior to BLM acquisition of the parcel, the previous owner may have also used other motor vehicles to cross the bridge. Since the ACEC lands are generally closed to vehicle use, and administrative work can be accomplished by foot traffic or materials can be moved by boat, there is no reason to allow for vehicle traffic on the proposed new bridge. The level of public bridge use and the cost of various bridge designs will be considered prior to a final design decision.

Project Location

The project area is located at the northwest of Boice Cope park at the boat launch. The legal location (description) of the project area is:

Township 31 South; Range 15 West; Section 8; NW1/4 of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4

The objective of this project is to perform an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the acquisition of the easement and the replacement of the bridge. The purpose of the easement acquisition is to acquire legal access where the BLM and the public have previously enjoyed access from Boice-Cope County Park onto public lands on the north and west sides of Floras Lake. Legal access will allow expenditure of public funds to rebuild the bridge. The purpose of the bridge is to provide for safe administrative and public access to this parcel, which crosses a fairly deep perennial stream. The need for access is to continue convenient public access into a parcel of lands that was acquired through the use of Land and Water Conservation Funds and which acquisition was funded in part due to the recognized value of public access and use of the parcel.

District Specialist Reports and other references can be found in the Environmental Assessment (EA) Analysis File, which is located at the Coos Bay District-BLM office in North Bend, OR., and is hereby incorporated by reference.

Scoping

The primary purpose for scoping is to identify the agencies' and public's concerns relating to a proposed project and defines the issues and alternatives that are examined in detail in this EA. The scoping process consisted of an ID Team that identified potential and significant issues that may develop into alternatives to the proposal. The general public was notified of the planned EA through public announcements in the local newspaper, *The World*. Also, local businesses involved in recreation and tourism in the area such as *The Floras Lake Bed & Breakfast* and *Big Air Windsurfing* were contacted to help solicit comments. Furthermore, adjacent landowners and those agencies and interested parties on the District's mailing list were contacted by letter. Scoping information can be found in the Analysis File.

Identified Issues

Through the scoping process the following issues were identified. Below is how the ID Team resolved these issues that were incorporated into the proposed action.

Issue 1: Will the acquisition of an easement or the replacement of the bridge affect the on-going management of *snowy plover*?

Resolution: The acquisition of an easement or replacement of the bridge is not likely to have an affect on the management of *snowy plover*. This is because levels of use and types of use are not anticipated to change. In fact, the acquisition of the easement will allow the BLM to install interpretive panels which will show *snowy plover* friendly hiking and beach walking techniques.

Issue 2: Will any special status botanical species be affected by the acquisition of an easement or the replacement of the bridge?

Resolution: Although there are some special status botanical species present on the BLM lands that the bridge easement accesses, it is anticipated that there will be no new effects from acquiring the easement and replacing the bridge.

Issue 3: How will recreational access be affected by the acquisition and replacement of the bridge?

Resolution: By acquiring the easement and replacing the bridge, recreational access will be assured and the existing user types will be allowed to continue to use the BLM lands west of the outlet. However, motorized users (not previously allowed) will continue to be prohibited from use of the federal lands through the design of the bridge.

Section II - Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

No Action

This alternative would involve the continuation of the current level of management activity (the existing situation). Under this alternative, the BLM would not acquire the bridge corridor easement from Curry County and therefore would not replace or repair the bridge.

Curry County would remain sole owner of the existing railcar bridge and related bridge corridor. It would be up to the County whether or not they repair or replace the bridge and what types of users they would allow to cross the bridge. Another words, the BLM would have virtually no control as to what types of traffic (i.e., automobiles and ATVs) gain access to BLM lands . Furthermore, the BLM would be unable to guarantee public access in the event that Curry County decides not to replace or repair the bridge.

Proposed Action

This alternative would involve the BLM purchasing an easement approximately 60 feet wide and 194 feet long or a total of .266 acres. This easement would effectively place the BLM as the owner of the bridge and its surrounding corridor. Once the easement has been acquired from Curry County, the BLM would remove the old bridge supports and then build a new bridge. This alternative would allow the BLM to have direct control over the type of traffic that could and could not gain access to the lands on the west side of the bridge. The proposed action would also allow the BLM to remain consistent with the original intentions of acquiring the parcels on the west side of the bridge, which included maintaining public access.

Design Features

This bridge would be designed to allow for foot and ADA accessible traffic but prevent four wheeled traffic from gaining access to the bridge (removable barrier to allow for administrative use). The structure would be approximately six feet in width and span a distance of 75 feet. This would allow the bridge to completely span the creek and prevent any abutments or other structures from being anchored into the creek or embankment.

During construction, a work bridge will be utilized to prevent heavy machinery from entering the outlet and causing damage to the streambanks and adding sedimentation into the water. The following design features will also be incorporated into the project:

- The bridge will be constructed at least two feet above the high water mark.
- Temporary sandbag dams or some other means will be used to isolate turbid waters and then this water will be pumped onto a vegetated flood plain or terrace area where it will naturally filter prior to reentering the aquatic system.
- All areas of disturbed soil will be seeded and mulched with an appropriate seed mix in order to reduce erosion during the wetter portions of the year.